



# Merry Christmas from the REACH team!

*We have been reflecting on what sets us apart as Christians – and as a Christian ministry – in this increasingly polarized and secular culture. Do we want people to notice, “They never swear. I doubt they drink or use drugs. They’re always pretty nice.” While these statements may be true, it’s not what we want a person’s first impression to be. We long for people to say, “I have never been loved like that before!”*

*When Jesus came on Christmas, He was love personified. He was not concerned with the outward appearance, but with the heart. The Bible tells us that Jesus’ appearance had nothing to draw people to him. Yet they were drawn like moths to the flame. He overwhelmed them with truth, wisdom, and authority. But most of all, love.*

*May that be true of REACH. And may it be true for each of you. That our authentic love would be the number one feature people see and are drawn to.*

*2017 has been another wonderful year of welcoming new families and journeying alongside all who have been with us for years. Thank you for all of your support. We appreciate you. May God bless you this Christmas and New Year.*

*Dan, Julia, Pam, and Pat*



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*Holiday Newsletter*

Safe community for those affected by HIV

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# “REACH has made me feel better... about everything.”

Violet, 18, was sitting miserably at the doctor’s office waiting to find out whether she had mono. The shocking news she got instead: she was HIV-positive. She couldn’t believe her ears. She never considered herself at risk for HIV.

Still shell-shocked the next week, she had her first HIV clinic appointment with Dr. Mary Fairchok – also the long-time camp doctor for REACH. Mary described to Violet all the support REACH had to offer. Violet was immediately drawn to having an understanding friend – a REACH Mentor – to walk alongside her in this new harsh reality.

A month later, Violet was matched with her new REACH mentor. She was shy at their first meeting, but her wide smile spoke volumes. In the coming years Violet poured out her thoughts and fears to her REACH mentor. She trusted no one else. Violet admitted that she had a phobia of blood draws and pills. She didn’t think she could stomach the horrible-tasting medicines. She even admitted she felt deeply “flawed” like no one would accept her again. Her mentor spoke to her words of comfort and encouragement – this is not a punishment;

you are beautiful and special; God loves you.

Seven years later, Violet married a man who loves her just the way she is. The REACH staff had a frozen yogurt date with Violet as a send-off to Texas, because of her husband’s new job. During her years there, she continued to receive personally-signed birthday cards from REACH, which she admits is one of her favorite things about REACH. She’s saved every single card for the last 10 years.

*“I believe I’m always being thought about.”*

Violet and her husband moved back to Tacoma last month. Within a few days she gave the REACH staff a surprise visit to announce that she was back in town. With her still-quiet voice, and beaming smile, she expressed how happy she was to be back with REACH. Now in her late-20’s she plans to “give back” as a volunteer Camp counselor. She can help a new generation of young girls know their immense worth – she can tell the story of REACH journeying with her from a fearful girl to a confident adult.



***“Our vision is that HIV-positive children, families, and young adults throughout the Pacific Northwest flourish with dignity and self-worth in the face of rejections and isolation.”***